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ABSTRACT

Self-concept and the variables that affect self-concept levels in children have been investigated by many researchers. The area of self-concept enhancing activities is a recent concern and research in the field is limited. A study was conducted to determine if self-concept enhancing activities would have an effect on the self-concept levels of third grade students. Third grade students (N=44), ability grouped for language arts, participated in the study. The Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale was used to assess self-concept levels, using pretest and posttest scores. The children were involved in self-concept enhancing activities for a period of 6 months. The t-test of matched pairs was used to determine if the null hypothesis were tenable. It was found that there was no significant difference at the 0.05 level in the self-concept levels of students in Group A (higher ability), Group B (average ability) and Group C (lower ability). Of the three teachers participating in the study, one teacher complied with the research design. The children in her language arts section showed an increase in self-concept level, independent of ability. The tendency toward significance of the one language arts section suggests a need for further research in the field of self-concept enhancing activities. (Author/NB)

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THE EFFECTS OF SELF CONCEPT ENHANCING ACTIVITIES ON SELF CONCEPT LEVELS IN THIRD GRADE STUDENTS

BARBARA V. GODLESKI

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education in Elementary Education in the Graduate School of East Stroudsburg University

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April 1986

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B.V.G.

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THE EFFECTS OF SELF CONCEPT ENHANCING ACTIVITIES ON SELF CONCEPT LEVELS IN THIRD GRADE STUDENTS (58 pp.)

Director of thesis: Dr. Florence R. McCormick-Halstead

Self concept and the variables that affect self concept levels in children have been investigated by many researchers. The area of self concept enhancing activities is a recent concern and research in the field is limited.

The purpose of this study was to determine if self concept enhancing activities do have an effect on the self concept levels of third grade students.

Forty four third grade students, ability grouped for language arts, participated in this study. The Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale was used to assess self concept levels, using pretest and posttest scores. The children were involved in self concept enhancing activities for a period of six months. The t-test of matched pairs was used to determine if the null hypothesis were tenable.

It was found that there was no significant difference at the 0.05 level in the self concept levels of Group A (Higher Ability), Group B (Average Ability) and Group C (Lower Ability).

Of the three teachers participating in the study, one teacher complied with the research design. The children in her language arts section did show an increase in self

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concept level, independent of ability. The tendency toward significance of the one language arts section suggests a need for further research in the field of self concept enhancing activities.

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THE EFFECTS OF SELF CONCEPT ENHANCING ACTIVITIES ON SELF CONCEPT LEVELS IN THIRD GRADE STUDENTS (58 PP.)

DIRECTOR OF THESIS: DR. FLORENCE R. MCCORMICK-HALSTEAD

The purpose of this study was to determine if self concept enhancing activities have an affect on self concept levels.

Forty-four third grade students participated in a program of self concept enhancing activities for a period of six months. The t-test of matched pairs was used to analyze the pre and posttest scores obtained on the Piers Harris Children's Self Concept Scale.

There was no significant difference at the .05 level in self concept levels.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Self concept has been the object of much research since the turn of the century. Initial research investigated self concept as a psychological phenomenon. As early as 1945, researchers began to realize that a relationship between self concept and academic achievement existed.[1] Since then research continues to provide evidence to suggest a positive correlation between self concept and academic achievement.

Throughout the fifties and sixties, much of the research being conducted in the area of self concept examined self concept as it affects performance, and performance as it affects self concept. Wattenberg and Clifford in their work with kindergarten children in 1962, found that self concept was a better indicator of reading success than were IQ scores.[2]

An earlier study by Diller found that success

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[1] Wallace La Benne and Bert I Green, Educational Implications of Self Concept Theory (Pacific Palisades, Calif.: Goodyear Publishing Company,Inc.,1964), p. 24.

[2] Wm. Wattenberg and C Clifford, Relationship of Self Concept to Beginning Achievement in Reading U.S. Office of Ed, Cooperative Research Project No. 377 (Detroit, Wayne State University, 1962), p. 14.

enhanced the self concepts of college students. These findings plus others lead Purkey to state,

> Although data do not provide clear cut evidence about which comes first - positive self concept or scholastic success, a negative self concept or scholastic failure - it does stress a strong reciprocal relationship and gives us reason to assume that enhancing the self concept is a vital influence in improving academic performance.[3]

Researchers of the sixties and seventies began to look at the importance of the school in the development and nurturing of a child's self concept. Purkey states that "next to the home, schools probably exert the single greatest influence on how students see themselves and their abilities.[4]

In a recent article, Purkey and his co-authors reinforce the importance of school experiences on the self concept of the student. They point out that self concept as a learner is an often overlooked aspect of self concept theory. "Self concept as learner is that part of a person's

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[3] William W. Purkey, Self Concept and School Achievement (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1970), p. 27.

[4] William W. Purkey, Inviting School Success: A Self Concept Approach to Teaching and Learning (Belmont, Calif. Wadsworth Publishing, Inc., 1978), p. 28.

global self' ... that relates most directly to school acheivement." [5]

Research suggests that self concept can be influenced by the teacher and the atmosphere of the learning environment. Educators need to explore methods of enhancing the self concept of children in the school environment through individual and group activities which can be used to create positive and enriching experiences for children.

Statement of Problem

The purpose of this study was to determine if self concept enhancement activities have an effect on the self concept of third grade students who have been ability grouped for language arts.

Hypothesis

The assumption this study is based on was:

Third grade students participating in self concept enhancement activities will show an increase in self concept scores, regardless of academic ability.

The null hypothesis states:

Third grade children who have been ability grouped in language arts will show no significant difference in

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[5] William W. Purkey, Abdel Raheim and Bob N. Cage, "Self Concept as Learner: An Overlooked Part of Self Concept Theory," The Journal of Humanistic Education and Development, 22 (1983), 52.

self concept gain scores as the result of a program of self concept enhancement activities.

The Importance of the Study

Self concept and its relationship to academic achievement has been examined by many investigators. Much of the research that has been done since the early sixties "shows a persistent and significant relationship between self concept and academic achievement."[6]

Several researchers have investigated developmental changes in the positiveness of self concept. Larned and Muller, as part of their study to investigate changes in positiveness of self concept and self esteem in grades one through nine, also examined changes in the relationship between self concept and academic achievement in grades two through nine.[7] When self concept, self esteem, and academic achievement were measured, they found that the positiveness of self concept and self esteem, each measured on a different scale, declined significantly in the area of academic achievement across the grades. Each year the mean scores for self concept and self esteem dropped in the area

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[6] Purkey, School Achievement ,p. 15.

[7] Donald T. Larned and Douglas Muller, "Development of Self concept in Grades One Through Nine",The Journal of Psychology,102 (1979), 143.

of academic achievement.[8]

In a similar study, Stenner and Katzenmeyer found that as age increased, the manner in which a child saw himself decreased. They also found that first graders were more positive about the quality of their school work than third graders. One of the questions raised by this study was: If some of the effects of our educational system are negative, are they reversible?[9]

In light of what we now know about the positive relationship between self concept and academic achievement and the important role the school and the teacher play in influencing the self concept of children, it is necessary to try to determine if self enhancement activities have a positive effect on the self concept of the child and ultimately on academic achievement scores. According to Haggard and Haggard, "the interpersonal behavior of the teacher is a key determinant of classroom climate and student self concept."[10] They also cite a study done by Van Horn in 1976 which found that students of teachers who used

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[8] Larned, p. 152.

[9] Jackson Stenner and William G. Katzenmeyer,"Self Concept Development in Young Children,"Phi Delta Kappan, 58 (1981), 356-357.

[10] Carroll R. Haggard and Jacqulyn F. Haggard, Interventional Strategies for Self Concept Development (ERIC ED 206-024), p. 3.

positive reinforcement measures abundantly had higher self concept scores.[11]

Bossing and Sassoon noted that "by creating learner supportive environments and accepting behavior linked with the learning task, positive gains can be expected."[12] They also believed that a variety of self concept enhancing techniques and activities should be provided for, but acknowledged further research is needed to identify the effectiveness of the activities and techniques being identified as beneficial in self concept enhancement programs.[13]

Through the investigation of the effects of self concept enhancement activities on children who have been ability grouped in language arts, this study may provide insight as to the effectiveness of self concept enhancement activities and some insight as to whether any particular ability group exhibited a greater increase in self concept scores.

Delimitations

In this study the investigator examined the effect

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[11] Haggard and Haggard, p. 13.

[12] Louis Bossing and Beverly Sassoon, Building Positive Self Concepts in Fourth Grade Students (ERIC ED 212 366), p.12.

[13] Bossing and Sassoon, p. 15.

of self concept enhancement activities on self concept scores. Self esteem, defined as "the value attached to oneself..,"[14], which is often used synonomously with self concept, will not be considered in this study. Although self concept will include self esteem since the testing instrument measures both, it does not differentiate between the two.

There are many variables which influence the development of self concept, such as socio-economic status, family structure, sex, language, mental and physical handicaps, and religion. The impact of these variables will not be considered in this study.

Other factors which affect the child within the classroom and influence self concept are, teacher attitude and parental pressure. These, too, will not be dealt with in this study.

Definition of Terms

Self Concept

Self concept was measured by the Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale, a valid and reliable self concept instrument which can be used with children ages

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[14] Robert I. Watson and Henry Clay Lindgren, Psychology of the Child and Adolescent(New York: MacMillan Company,Inc.,1979), p. 582.

eight to eighteen years.[15] Self concept, as assessed by the Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale, is defined as "a relatively stable set of self attitudes reflecting both a description and evaluation of one's own behavior and attributes."[16]

Self Concept Enhancement Activities

Self concept enhancement activities are defined by Canfield and Wells as "specific classroom activities that you can use to enhance the self concepts of...students."[17]

Activity

An activity is

> any...learning situation in which children willingly engage, because to do so is satisfying and serves as a means of reaching a worthwhile goal desirable to the children...[18]

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[15] E.V. Piers and O.B. Harris, "Age and Other Correlates of Self Concept in Children," Journal of Educational Psychology, 55 (1964), 92.

[16] Ellen V.Piers, Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale Revised Manual (Los Angeles, California: Western Psychological Services,1984), p. 5.

[17] Jack Canfield and Harold C. Wells, One Hundred Ways to Enhance Self Concept in the Classroom (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1976), p. 17.

[18] Carter V. Good, Dictionary of Education (New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1973), p. 9.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Investigation into the relationship between self concept and academic achievement began in the 1940's and continued to be an active research area until the mid 1970's.

Researchers have examined the correlation between self concept and academic achievement in specific subject areas (i.e.reading), variables within the education structure such as teacher self concept, environment, mainstreaming, promotion and expectations, and various constructs of self concept (i.e. concept of ability).

This chapter will review studies which have been done in the areas of development of self concept, teacher self concept and self concept enhancement, in order to provide a background of information for the presentation of this research.

Development of Self Concept

"The development of self begins by the baby's direct interaction of his organism with incoming stimuli, starting with tactile, kinesthetic contacts with the mother." [19]

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[19] Shirley C. Samuels, Enhancing Self Concept in Early Childhood (New York: Human Sciences Press, 1977), p. 67.

As an infant, parental influence is a primary factor in the development of self concept. The infant-parent interaction, especially the mother in the first months, provides a basis for his/her feelings about himself/herself. The father, although he does affect the child's development of self concept, is not a primary influence at this stage. Erikson, in his stages of development stresses the need for consistent loving care by the mother as being essential for the development of trust. Samuels states that this trust is the foundation for the development of identity.[20] As the child's world expands, other members of the family (sisters, brothers, grandparents and close relatives) have a significant impact on his perceptions of himself and his environment. Still, the mother has great influence as the primary caretaker.

In Samuel's discussion of the development of self concept, she points out the need for separation and autonomy if the child is to move toward a positive concept of self. She refers to Erikson's theory that the child's environment should allow gradual movement toward the autonomy of free choice, guided by reasonable limits. The development of language also provides a basis for the child's increasing awareness and perception of himself. "By the time a child

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[20] Samuels, p. 69.

has entered the preschool period of development, he has a fairly well defined concept of who he is."[21] By this time the self concept has begun to stabilize and becomes fairly resistant to change.

La Benne and Greene point out, however, that although the child's concept of himself is well developed by the time he reaches school age, four to five years old, he will continue to be influenced by his experiences and interactions with family, peers, teachers and others who fall into the realm of significant others.[22] "Significant others" are those people who greatly influence the child.

Significant others continue to influence an individual's concept of self throughout his life. The quality of the interaction and type of response elicited between people, whom the individual respects or deems important, and himself is necessary to a continued positive sense of self concept.[23]

Teacher Self Concept

When we speak of "significant others", it is necessary

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[21] Samuels, p. 72.

[22] Wallace D. La Benne and Bert I. Greene, 1969, as quoted in Dov Peretz Elkins, Self Concept Sourcebook (Rochester: Growth Associates, 1979), p. 159.

[23] Robert I. Watson and Henry Clay Lindgren, Psychology of the Child and the Adolescent (New York: MacMillan Publishing Co., 1979), p. 334.

to look at the role the teacher plays in fostering positive self concept attitudes in students. In his presentation at the International Reading Association, Dr. Mangieri stated it was his belief "that for virtually all children, and especially those children who view the teacher as a parent figure, the teacher is a very strong and powerful force in the formation of their self concept."[24]

Experts claim that the teacher's self concept is an important element in the teacher-student interaction and classroom environment. Tonelson points out that there are six factors in the classroom environment that will enhance self image: challenge, freedom, respect, warmth, control, and success. He believes that a teacher with a positive self concept is better able to provide this type of environment.[25] Purkey discusses this fact in his book Self Concept and School Achievement when he states "In order to provide a positive influence on student self concept, the teacher must have a positive self concept.[26]

Research has been done on improving teachers' self concept and their skills for interacting with others.

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[24] Mangieri, p. 8.

[25] Stephen W. Tonelson, "The Importance of Teacher Concept to Creating a Healthy Psychological Environment for Learning", Education, 102 (1981), 99.

[26] William W. Purkey, School Achievement (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall), p. 19.

Goodwin and Payne studied twenty eight teachers enrolled in a three week graduate workshop which met four hours a day. They randomly selected an experimental group of fourteen teachers to be involved in the training program to enhance teachers' self concept and to develop teachers' interpersonal skills. The control group of fourteen teachers were taught reading methodology and individualized instruction. The experimental group had a + 2.31 difference between the mean scores on the pre and posttest scores of the Tennessee Self Concept Scale while the control group had + 0.17. The researchers plan to do a follow up study to determine if there were lasting effects from the training, and to see if the training had an effect on the teachers' students in regard to self concept level and achievement. They felt this was necessary in order to make a more valid statement, especially in the area of the transfer effectiveness of the training.[27]

A study done by Felker, Stanwyck and Kay suggests that a self concept enhancement program for teachers will be responsible for moderate positive change in the child's self concept. In their study, half the teachers, in a large school system grades one through six, participated in a

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[27] Gail C. Goodwin and Delores B. Payne, "The Relationship of Human Relations Training to the Improvement of Teachers," Education, 102 (1981), 114.

twelve week program designed to help them understand and apply self concept enhancing methods. Half the teachers did not participate in the program and taught as usual. The children of the participating teachers showed a moderate increase in self concept level and academic achievement. The researchers felt the shortened nature of the program (twelve weeks) may have limited the results. Perhaps growth would have been even greater over a longer period of time.[28]

Another aspect of the role the teacher plays in enhancing self concept in children is in the area of expectations. It has been suggested that a teacher's expectations for a student can directly affect the student's perception of his academic ability.[29]

Purkey cites a study by Davidson and Lang which found that the students' perception of the teacher's feelings toward him correlated with his perception of himself.[30]

There have been many other studies conducted to determine what effect, if any, teacher expectations have on student self perception. Brookover, Erikson and Joiner

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[28] Donald W. Felker, Douglas J. Stanwyck and Richard S. Kay, "The Effects of a Teacher Program in Self Concept Enhancement in Pupils' Self Concept, Anxiety, and Intellectual Achievement Responsibility," Journal of Educational Research, 66 (1973), 443.

[29] Elkins, p. 176.

[30] Purkey, School Achievement, p. 45.

conducted a comprehensive study of students, grades seven though twelve, over a six year span. One of the purposes of the study was to see if self concept improved as the result of expectations and evaluations by significant others. The conclusion was "The hypothesis that students' perceptions of evaluations of their academic ability by significant others (teachers, parents and friends) are associated with self concepts of academic ability, was confirmed."[31]

This conclusion was further illustrated in a study by Rosenthal and Jacobson. They conducted their study in an elementary school with 650 students. They randomly selected the names of 130 students who were identified by teachers as having high academic potential based on previous testing. Not only did these children score higher on intelligence tests and other measures, they also were happier and more curious according to their teachers. This evidence suggests that if the teacher expects the child to succeed academically, it is more than likely he will.[32]

Dr. Waitley, when setting up one of his research projects could not understand why he was getting the results

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[31] W.B. Brookover, E.L. Erikson, and L.M. Joiner, Self Concept of Ability and School Achievement III: Relationship of Self Concept to Achievement in High School (East Lansing: Office of Research and Publication, 1969), p. 110.

[32] A. Rosenthal and J. Jacobson, 1968, as quoted in William Purkey, Self Concept and School Achievement (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1970), 52.

he was from his subjects. In reviewing his selection of subjects he became aware of the fact that he had unwittingly prejudged who would be in the control group. He concluded that in some way, whether by his actions, expressions or inferences, he must have imparted what his expectations were to his subjects. This is an example of the subtle way in which a teacher can, unknowingly, affect students perceptions of themselves and a researcher bias his results.[33]

According to research, the teacher plays a very important role in the continuing development of the childs' self concept. In order to understand the implications of these research findings on education, it is necessary to look at the research that has been done on self concept and academic achievement to see if there is a correlation between the two.

Self Concept and Academic Achievement

It stands to reason that if a child's environment and experiences in the school setting are positive and reinforcing, his chances for academic success will be enhanced. Therefore, one could assume that there would be strong relationship between self concept and academic achievement. Much of the research, though not all, that has been done

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[33] Dennis E. Waitley, The Psychology of Winning, Taped Lecture, Allentown: Daytimers,Inc., n.d.

since the early fifties "shows a persistent and significant relationship between self concept and academic achievement."[34]

Campbell and Bledsoe, two of the early researchers in this area, found that sex differences tended to influence the relationship between self concept and academic achievement especially in the area of underachievement. Both researchers found that male underachievers had more negative self concepts than female underachievers.[35]

Barim, Shaw, Edson, Bell and Frank were also among the early researchers concerned with underachievers. The relationship between self concept and underachievement appeared to be stronger in males than females in these studies.[36]

Suppositions can be made as to why male underachievers have more negative self concepts than do females, but the studies did not deal with this aspect. Baum, in particular, felt the "influence of sex on the self concept...needs much more research".[37]

Research in the fifties and sixties, has dealt more with the effect of self concept on academic achievement rather than with other variables that affect self concept,

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[34] Purkey, School Achievement, p. 15.

[35] Purkey, School Achievement, p. 16-17.

[36] Purkey, School Achievement, p. 15.

[37] Purkey, School Achievement, p. 15.

such as sex differences, and socio-economic status. In other words, researchers appear to believe the child's self concept level will effect the level of academic achievement. Many of the studies conducted have been in the subject area of reading. Although research in this one area does not give an overall view of academic achievement, it would seem to be indicative of total achievement since reading is considered to be the foundation on which academic learning is based. "As soon as he has gained some degree of skill, reading becomes the child's basic tool of learning".[38]

An early study by Lumpkin in 1959, who studied overachievers and underachievers in reading at the fifth grade level found that overachievers had a significantly more positive self concept than underachievers. Mangieri uses this study as one of many to establish a basis for his statement "There is a positive relationship between self concept and reading achievement".[39]

In a later study, Askew studied 140 black children in the third grade and sixth grade. The Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale was used to measure self concept levels, and the Iowa Test of Basic Skills was used to assess academic achievement. A significant positive rela-

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[38] Gertrude Hildreth, Teaching Reading (New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc. 1958), p. 7.

[39] Mangieri, p. 9.

tionship between self concept and academic achievement existed when the data were subjected to statistical analysis.[40]

Not all studies have found positive relationships between self concept and academic achievement. In 1977, Mintz and Muller conducted a study to examine the correlation between academic achievement and factor specific and global measures of self concept. Self Concept, as measured by the Primary Self Concept Inventory, is based on six scales: physical size, emotional state, peer acceptance, helplessness, success, and student self. Although the term student self is not defined, the literature indicates it is the students perception of himself in an academic setting. The global measure was derived by totaling the scores of the six specific factor scales. Subjects were 314 fourth and sixth grade students. When the data were analyzed "... the most startling result of this study is the universally low correlation between self concept and achievement."[41] Mintz and Muller felt that the low correlation between achievement, which was based on the Comprehensive Tests of

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[40] Dennis H. Askew, "The Difference on Measures of Self Concept and Academic Achievement with Respect to Identification, Sex, Age, and Varying Shades of Skin color Among Black Children," DAI, 39 (1979), 7158A (George Washington University).

[41] Richard Mintz and Douglas Muller, "Academic Achievement as a Function of Specific and Global Measures of Self Concept," Journal of Psychology, 97 (1977), 56.

Basic Skills, and self concept was due to the fact that the testing instrument, The Primary Self Concept Inventory, was designed to identify children with a low self concept, but not to differentiate between levels of high self concept.[42]

Another study which found no significant correlation between self concept scores and reading achievement was conducted by Williams in 1973. Subjects were selected from three first grade classrooms. The California Achievement Test was used to validate reading achievement and the Coopersmith Self Esteem Inventory was used to measure self concept. She found that, "... there was essentially no relationship between children's self concepts and their first and second grade reading achievement."[43] Williams suggests that one possible interpretation for the lack of correlation may be that "the self concept of a young child may be subject to wide fluctuations in mood and may vary temporarily according to situations or cyclically according to temperment."[44]

Research since the sixties continues to reinforce the theory that there is a relationship between self concept and

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[42] Mintz, p. 57.

[43] Jean H. Williams, "The Relationship of Self Concept and Reading Achievement in First Grade Children," Journal of Educational Research, 66 (1973), 379.

[44] Williams, p. 379.

academic achievement, and is examining self concept as influenced by variables such as first-name desirability, parental discipline, promotion, self concept consistency and mainstreaming.

Garwood conducted a study in 1976 that found students with first names which the teacher subjectively rated as desirable had higher self concept scores than students with names the teacher thought undesirable.[45]

In regard to self concept and parent discipline, many studies have been done. Flynn's study in 1976 found that children whose parent used the "firm but fair" approach had higher self concepts than those children whose parents were too lenient or too strict. His study also suggested that marital satisfaction may also have an effect on a child's self concept.[46]

Each year teachers are concerned with whether or not to promote a borderline student. Many studies show that nothing is gained through retention, others suggest retention can have negative affects. Haggard cites a study by Koons on the effects of non-promotion on self concept. He administered a self concept inventory to first grade

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[45] Carrol R. and Jacquelyn F. Haggard, Intervention Strategies for Self Concept Development (ERIC ED 206 024), p. 5.

[46] Haggard, p. 6.

students before school started in September and after school concluded in June. He tested them again at the end of the second grade. "The results indicated that non promotion in first grade students did not cause a decline in self concept when compared to the promoted borderline students."[47]

Mainstreaming is becoming the established method of involving classified students in the school program, especially in New Jersey. Calhoun and Elliot's study indicates that mainstreaming for part of the day may produce improvement in self concept and achievement.[48]

Classroom Environment

Since self concept appears to play an important role in the child's academic success, it seems appropriate to look at what can be done in the classroom to create an atmosphere that would enhance self concept. In order to do this, other researchers have looked at the environment the teacher establishes through her attitudes and actions and through the activities and programs that can be utilized to enhance self concept.

Bossing and Sassoon reported that Silvernail conducted research in this area which suggests that improved academic achievement will lead to a positive self concept in

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[47] Haggard, p. 7.

[48] Haggard, p. 11.

children. Several teaching techniques that Silvernail identifies as effective in improving achievement are:

1. Use of praise
2. Use of pupil ideas
3. Frequent questioning
4. Review of exercises
5. Clear presentations and questions
6. Teacher enthusiasm
7. Increased time on task
8. Direct instruction.[49]

As a result of their research, Canfield and Wells determined four elements of a supportive classroom:

1. Accepting pupil contributions without judgement
2. Maintaining a "you can do it" attitude
3. Listening, listening, listening
4. Being, in all ways, a friend.[50]

"Positive learning attitudes are fostered through positive classroom climate and interpersonal relations with students..."[51] Research has identified six factors that

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[49] Lewis Bossing and Beverly Sassoon, Building Positive Self Concepts in Fourth Grade (ERIC ED 212 366), p. 9.

[50] Canfield, p. 16.

[51] Haggard, p. 12.

help to create a positive learning environment. They are:

1. Presenting the children with a challenge
2. Giving them the freedom to meet established goals, while at the same time
3. Maintaining overall classroom control (permissiveness tends to lower self esteem)
4. Displaying warmth
5. Demonstrating respect for the students as individuals
6. Providing an atmosphere for success.[52]

Research regarding the effects of classroom activities to enhance self concept is limited. Haggard and Haggard note that "global instructional programs which seek to improve student self concept have, at best, produced moderate success."[53]

Although research in the area of self concept enhancing activities is limited, there are many activities which are acknowledged by professionals to be effective methods for working with children and enhancing self concept.

A limited number of studies have dealt with programs utilizing self concept enhancing activities using small groups of students with a common problem. In 1977, Fournier

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[52] Haggard, p. 14.

[53] Haggard, p. 17.

conducted a study on first grade repeaters. This small group met with a counselor for eight sessions of forty-five minutes each. The results of this study seem to indicate that the children had more positive attitudes and feelings about themselves .[54]

In an article by Burnett, he states "there has been little development, description or research completed...that aims at enhancing the self concept of children in the regular classroom."[55]

However Canfield and Wells, in their book One Hundred Ways to Enhance Self Concept in the Classroom, believe that "it is possible to change self concepts and that it is possible for teachers to effect the change."[56] They have compiled a collection of activities, complete with detailed instructions, that teachers can use in the classroom. They gathered these activities from teachers who attended workshops or classes taught by the authors. The teachers tried different activities in their own classrooms and then reported the results. The authors believe that through the

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[54] M.J. Fournier, "A Self-enhancement Activity Group for First Grade Repeaters," Elementary School Guidance & Counseling,11 (1977), 269.

[55] Paul C. Burnett, "A Self Concept Enhancement Program for Children in the Regular Classroom," Elementary School Guidance & Counseling, (1983), 102.

[56] Canfield, p. 4.

use of activities such as those mentioned in their book, teachers can enhance the self concept of their students. They note that it has been their

> experience...that subject matter learning has never suffered because of the time spent on self concept building. Quite to the contrary, it seems to be enhanced with the new self confidence of the students.[57]

From the mid-seventies into the 1980's much of the research being conducted in the area of self concept among school students has been aimed at specific populations and/or specific academic areas at Junior High and High School levels. The specific populations being investigated are cultural minority groups, physically or mentally handicapped, children of single parents, working mothers and other sociologic groups. Since a majority of research available shows a positive correlation between self concept and academic achievement, researchers are now investigating other variables that affect self concept.

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[57] Canfield, p. 8.

CHAPTER III

Methods and Procedures

The data required for this study were the self concept scores of a select student group of forty four third grade children gathered through the Piers-Harris Childrens' Self Concept Scale before the study began and the self concept score of the same group on the same test at the conclusion of the study. The participants were involved in self concept enhancement activities for a period of six months.

The reliability of the Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale used in this study as the pre and posttest, was investigated earlier in a study conducted by the authors. Using the ninety-five item version of the scale, the study utilized half the standardization sample from grades three, six and ten. The retest interval was four months. "The resulting coefficients of 0.72, .71, and .72 were judged satisfactory..."[58] Since that time, the scale has been reduced to eighty items. In a study conducted by Wing in 1966, the eighty item scale was shown to have greater stability, using a two month and a four month pretest posttest

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[58] Piers, p. 53.

interval, with resulting coefficients of .77 and .79.[59] The resulting eighty item scale was used in this investigation as the pre and posttest.

Population

This was quasi-experimental design. The subjects participating in the study were forty-four third grade students attending a small (two hundred and fifty students) suburban township lower elementary school(Kindergarten through fourth grade) in New Jersey. The average income, for the county according to the 1980 United States Census Report, was $36,067.[60] According to a state report, the average salary in the school district in 1983 was significantly higher than the county average income level reported by the Census Bureau, making the district one of the highest income areas in the county.[61]

The students were assigned to three heterogeneous homerooms and participated in science, social studies, penmanship and special subject areas: art, music, physical education and library in these homeroom groups. The special

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[59] Piers, p. 54.

[60] Bureau of the Census, 1980 Census of Population and Housing (Washington,D.C.,1983), p. 184.

[61] "County Wealthy,Says State Report," Hunterdon Democrat, 2 June 1983, p.2. cols. 2-5.

subject teachers were not involved in the study.

The students were divided into ability groups for langauge arts. The groups were determined by the teacher's decision, based on a composite of data available. These data included a subjective assessment of the child's reading level in the Houghton-Mifflin Reading Program and the mastery of skills based on an assessment test produced by Houghton-Mifflin. As the result of this assessment, the students were more or less homogeneously grouped.

By the time this study began, cognitive abilities scores (COGAT) were available for all of the children involved in the study. Although these scores were not used as a measure in determining the child's placement in a group, the teachers referred to these scores, particularly for those children who show an unusually large discrepency between COGAT scores and achievemnet levels.

The groups, as determined by reading level, skill mastery and teacher assessment, were referred to as Group A, Group B, and Group C. Group A is the higher ability group. Group B is the average ability group and Group C is the lower ability group.

In an effort to control for variations due to teacher personality, each child was taught by each of the three teachers. The students changed classes for all academic subject areas. Language arts and mathematics were ability grouped, so it was possible for one child to have the same

teacher for both subjects. Each of the three teachers taught one other subject area, science, social studies or penmanship. Since the children participated in these subject areas as homeroom units, each child had the opportunity to be with each teacher for at least one forty-five minute period per day.

Prior to initiating the study, the researcher had directed a planning period of approximately one to two hours with the teachers involved. The time was spent familiarizing teachers with the activities, selecting, locating, and collecting materials, and arranging schedules. Time was spent acquainting the teachers with the Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale and how to administer it.

How Data Were Obtained

The data for this study were obtained by administering the Piers Harris Children's Self Concept Scale in two sequential time periods separated by six months.

eatment of Data

This study compared the pretest-posttest scores of the children who were tested on the Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale for gains in self concept in Group A, Group B and Group C by using the t-test of matched pairs.

Since the observations of the pretest were paired with the observations on the posttest; t-tests for matched

pairs were employed to test the mean gain scores for each of the three groups. Tests were two-tailed tests at the .Ø5 level of significance.

Analysis of the data is presented in Chapter IV.

Procedures for the Proposed Research

The researcher set up a meeting with the superintendent of schools and with the building principal. The purpose of these meetings was to outline the research proposal, to inform them of the measurement device to be used, to provide timelines for the proposed research and to answer questions about the study. The desired outcome of the meetings was to obtain the necessary administrative support necessary for the success of the study.

The next step was to meet with each teacher,individually, explain the research, what their participation involved and solicit their support and involvement. During this meeting, a discussion regarding the type of program, the method of identifying children for ability groups and the areas of study included in the language arts program took place. The language arts program consists of reading, spelling, grammmar, and composition.

Once administrative and teacher support had been established, the collection of appropriate activities began. The activities included games, individual and group activ-

ities, crafts, stories and role playing activities through dramatization or puppetry. These activities could be used at any time during the day.

Packets of the activities were given to the teachers at least one month before the investigation was to begin. After the teachers had an opportunity to examine the packets, a group meeting of the teachers and the researcher was held. It was necessary for the teachers to feel comfortable with the activities and to feel confident in presenting them to the children. This meeting was a forum for discussion of the activities. The amount of classroom time suggested for self concept enhancing activities was the same for all teachers, fifteen to twenty minutes per day.

On the agreed date, the Piers-Harris Self Concept Scale was administered to all third grade students by the homeroom teacher. The manual suggested that all items be read aloud for children under fourth grade level. Therefore, the test was administered orally. Items not understood by the students were clarified. Each statement was read twice and no time limits were imposed.

The researcher met with teachers once a month for approximately fifteen minutes to assess the activities, solve problems which occurred and to see if the time allotment was adequate. The time allocated for these activities was adjusted, if necessary. New activities were added if the teachers involved in the study felt it necessary.

The teachers administered the Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale six months later under the same conditions as they did earlier.

When all the scores were collected, they were analyzed using the mean, standard deviation and the t-scores on the pretest and posttest. A .05 significance level was considered appropriate for the rejection of the null hypothesis.

CHAPTER IV

Analysis of Data

The purpose of this chapter is to present the analysis of the data collected.

The t-test of matched pairs was be used to analyze the pretest and posttest scores of each of the three groups participating in the study.

The pretest was administered to each homeroom group on October 9, 1984 to measure the student's self concept levels before the introduction of self concept enhancing activities into the curriculum. The posttest was administered on April 18, 1985, after twenty four weeks of student participation in self concept enhancing activities, to determine if a change in self concept levels occurred. Self concept levels were assessed through the use of the Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale.

The results of the statistical analysis are shown in Tables I, II and III. The tables include the mean, standard deviation and t-value of the pretest and posttest scores for Group A, Group B and Group C. The groups were homogeneously grouped for language arts based on a composite of available

data.

Table I

Group A (Higher Ability)

Null hypothesis:

Third grade children in Group A will show no significant difference in self concept gain scores as the result of a program of self concept enhancement activities.

	Mean	Standard Dev.	t-test
Pretest	69.0667	8.302	
			0.92
Posttest	67.2000	9.763	

Since 2.145 is required to reject and 0.92 < 2.145 the null hypothesis is retained at the .05 level for Group A.

Table II

Group B (Average Ability)

Null hypothesis:

Third grade children in Group A will show no significant difference in self concept gain scores as the result of a program of self concept enhancement activities.

	Mean	Standard Dev.	t-test
Pretest	59.0000	10.677	
			0.24
Posttest	58.2857	13.702	

Since 2.160 is required to reject and 0.24 < 2.160 the null hypothesis is retained at the .05 level for Group B.

Table III

Group C (Lower Ability)

Null hypothesis:

Third grade children in Group A will show no significant difference in self concept gain scores as the result of a program of self concept enhancement activities.

	Mean	Standard Dev.	t-test
Pretest	57.8462	14.679	
			0.17
Posttest	57.1538	16.113	

Since 2.179 is required to reject and 0.17 < 2.179 the null hypothesis is retained at the .05 level for Group C.

Therefore, the null hypothesis:

> Third grade children who have been ability grouped in language arts will show no significant difference in self concept gain scores as the result of a program of self concept enhancement activities,

was retained at the .05 level.

CHAPTER V

Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Summary

This study was conducted to determine whether the participation in self concept enhancement activities by third grade students would produce a change in self concept levels. The subjects for this study were third grade students in a small elementary school in suburban New Jersey. This study was developed on a quasi experimental design which is recommended "when randomization is not feasible."[62] The study was designed so that all children received the same treatment which was necessary because of the grouping methods used at this particular grade level. The three teachers involved were provided with the same information, activities and reading list.

The attempt was made to determine the effects of self concept enhancement activities on the self concept levels of

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[62] John W. Best, Research in Education (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice Hall, Inc, 1981), p. 68.

the students. Self concept level was assessed through the use of the Piers Harris Children's Self Concept Scale.

The t-test of matched pairs was used to determine any changes in self concept levels between the pre and posttest scores. This was a two tailed test with a .Ø5 level of significance set to retain or reject the null hypothesis.

Conclusions

The null hypothesis stated:

> Third grade children who have been ability grouped in Language Arts will show no significant difference in self concept gain scores as the result of a program of self concept enhancement activities.

As can be seen in Chapter IV, Table I, II and III, there was no significant difference observed in self concept levels within any of the three groups. As the study progressed the researcher became aware of the fact that two of the teachers involved in the study were having great difficulty implementing the self concept enhancement activities into their programs. The only activity they used throughout the duration of the study which was considered a self concept enhancement activity was a group discussion technique to guide the homeroom group towards more positive interactions and reactions with one of the third grade

students. This was based on the Magic Circle technique listed, but the format for the Magic Circle technique was not followed. The third teacher was utilizing some of the activities listed plus some activities from other sources.

The grouping of the students by language arts sections was done to try to eliminate to the greatest extent possible the superior teacher effect. Each group in the study was made up of students from all three teachers, as each teacher had three levels in her language arts section. If the research had been designed so that groups were arranged by teacher, the students from the teacher using the self enhancement activities would have shown self concept level increases as a group, independent of ability. There was an 8.875 difference in the mean scores between the pretest and posttest, which is not considered significant at the .05 level. However, because of the increase in the mean scores of this group over the differences in mean scores in Group A (1.86), Group B (.734) and Group C (.692), it could be assumed that self concept enhancement activities do have a positive effect on self concept. Further study is warranted to determine to what extent, if any, self concept enhancement activities affect self concept levels.

At the conclusion of the treatment, this researcher decided to interview each of the teachers individually to determine which self concept enhancement activities were

used, how much time they were able to spend and if the activities were beneficial (see Appendix E). This was unplanned, but in light of the difficulties that arose, it was hoped that the interview would help to identify problem areas.

Recommendations

The result and conclusion of this investigation suggest the following recommendations:

1. That a future study to determine the effects of self concept enhancement activities on self concept levels be a true experimental design rather than a quasi research design.
2. That in future studies to determine the effects of self concept enhancement activities, all teachers participating in the study be involved in a training program to enhance teacher self concept and to develop interpersonal skills, prior to the beginning of the study.
3. That teacher training be designed to demonstrate how the activities can be implemented within the curriculum.
4. That the researcher develop avenues of control to assure compliance with the research design during the agreed time period.

5. That in future studies experimental and control group participants be located in different school districts.

6. That future studies include a larger and more varied population.

7. That an investigation be conducted to determine not only the effects of self concept activities, but also the effects activities coupled with other variables theorists consider as self concept enhancing, i.e. classroom environment and teacher attitude.

8. That a longitudinal study be conducted to determine the long range effects of self concept enhancement activity.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX C

Self Concept Enhancing Activities

ALL ABOUT ME

Make a carrell out of cardboard and decorate attractively. Leave it set up in a corner of the classroom. Each week a child will have the opportunity to bring in pictures of his/her family, pets, friends, etc. for display in the center. The student may also bring in items that have special for him/her (i.e. baseball hat, soccer ball, art work he/she has done). Have a container at the center labelled "Feel Good Words". The child may choose a different word for each day, leave the same word up or not put any word up.

HOW I FEEL

Have children make a booklet, one section to list things that make him feel good and one section for things that make him feel bad. The child may illustrate the booklet as he wishes. Give the child an opportunity to discuss the items in the booklet.

THE JOURNAL

Have children keep a journal of their reactions to the

activities of the day. Children may record their reactions whenever they have the opportunity or the teacher may set aside time at the end of the day. Children may share their journals if they wish or keep them private.

THE NAME GAME

This is a good get acquainted game. The class sits in a circle and the teacher begins by saying "I am Mrs. Smith", the next child says "I am Don Jones and that is Mrs. Smith". Continue around the circle until everyone has a turn. With younger children it is best to start with a small group (i.e. a reading group).

GUESS WHO I AM

Give each child a 3x5 card. Have the children write down some biographical information about themselves that describes them but not too obvious as to who they are. Collect the cards and read them while the class tries to guess who each card belongs to.

A COLLAGE OF ME

Give each child a 12x18 sheet of construction paper. Have a lot of different magazines available. Children cut out pictures that represent things they like to do, etc. and have them arrange them on the paper and glue them down. Give each child an opportunity to tell the class about

his/her picture. It is also possible to do a silhouette of each child and have the child glue the pictures he/she cuts out inside the outline of the silhouette.

A FEATHER IN MY HAT

This may be used with an individual or with the whole class. Each time a child or the class does something positive, they earn a feather for their hat. The teacher writes on the feather what it was for and signs it. Other teachers or the principal may award a feather also. A specified number earns something special (i.e. lunch with the teacher). This is especially effective with younger children.

STUDENT OF THE DAY

Choose child by drawing a name from a container. That child is the student of the day. The other children contribute to a list all the good things they notice about that child. They are recorded and the student of the day takes his list home at the end of the day.

These activities have been collected over the years from colleagues in many different school districts. An excellent resource for more activities is 100 Ways to Enhance Self Concept in the Classroom by Jack Canfield and Harold Wells.

APPENDIX D

Reading List

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APPENDIX E

Post Study Interview

1. Did you use any of the activities listed? If not, why?

   Teacher 1 - No - too heavy an academic schedule.

   Teacher 2 - No - too much subject matter to cover.

   Teacher 3 - Yes

2. Did you use any other activity which you consider self concept building?

   Teacher 1 - Discussion groups, learning centers.

   Teacher 2 - Discussion groups.

   Teacher 3 - Learning Centers, self help activities, computers and plays.

3. How much time did you spend each day on the activities?

   Teacher 1 - It depends on the situation.

   Teacher 2 - It depends.

   Teacher 3 - At least fifteen minutes.

4. Do you think the children derived any benefit from the activities you used?

   Teacher 1 - Yes

   Teacher 2 - Yes

   Teacher 3 - Yes, but there is no way to measure how much.

5. Do you think self concept building should be a concern of the public school?

Teacher 1 - Yes, but with the heavy academic load and the number of children, it is difficult.

Teacher 2 - Yes, it probably should, but with the emphasis on academics it's difficult.

Teacher 3 - Yes, It is one of the most important things a teacher can do.

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THE EFFECTS OF SELF CONCEPT ENHANCING ACTIVITIES ON SELF CONCEPT LEVELS IN THIRD GRADE STUDENTS (58 pp.)
Director of thesis: Dr. Florence R. McCormick-Halstead

Self concept and the variables that affect self concept levels in children have been investigated by many researchers. The area of self concept enhancing activities is a recent concern and research in the field is limited.

The purpose of this study was to determine if self concept enhancing activities do have an effect on the self concept levels of third grade students.

Forty four third grade students, ability grouped for language arts, participated in this study. The Piers-Harris Children's Self Concept Scale was used to assess self concept levels, using pretest and posttest scores. The children were involved in self concept enhancing activities for a period of six months. The t-test of matched pairs was used to determine if the null hypothesis were tenable.

It was found that there was no significant difference at the 0.05 level in the self concept levels of Group A (Higher Ability), Group B (Average Ability) and Group C (Lower Ability).

Of the three teachers participating in the study, one teacher complied with the research design. The children in her language arts section did show an increase in self

concept level, independent of ability. The tendency toward significance of the one language arts section suggests a need for further research in the field of self concept enhancing activities.